

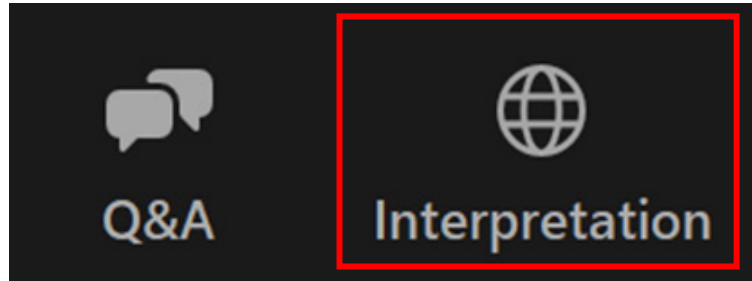


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Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead – Scoping Report

Informational Webinar
October 24, 2023

La interpretación en vivo está disponible en español



Live language interpretation is available in Spanish



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Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead – Scoping Report

Informational Webinar – October 24, 2023

Zoom Orientation



Webinar is being recorded



Microphones are muted



Chat feature is turned off



Submit comments using Q&A during the presentation



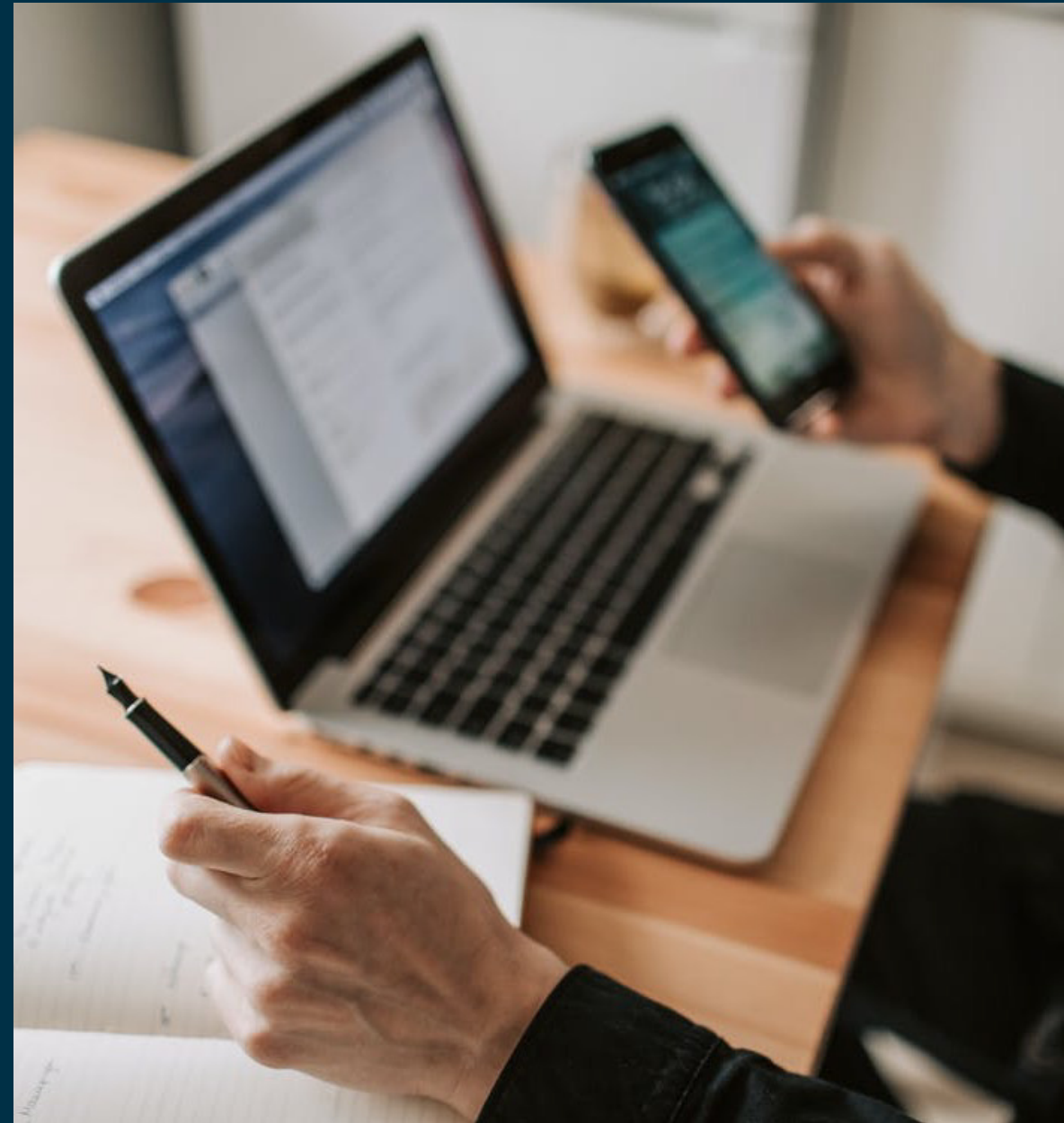
Chat



Q&A



Interpretation

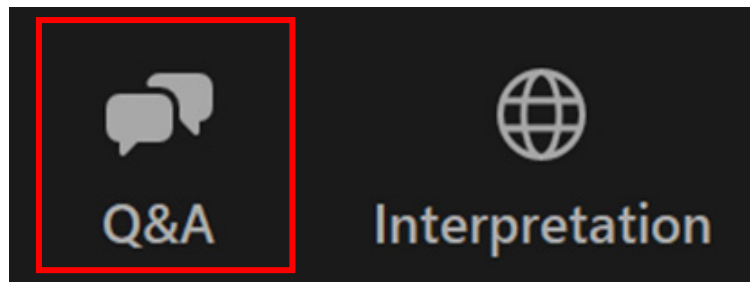


Questions about the Presentation?

How to submit a question

- Click the Q&A button
- A box will pop up
- Type your question
- Click send
- Responses to questions will appear in the Q&A box

Questions are not part of the project record





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Presentation

- **Recap of the Scoping Process**
- **Overview of Comments Received and Key Themes**
- **Anticipated Purpose and Need**
- **Preliminary Assessment of the Proposed Federal Action**
- **Next Steps in the Post-2026 Process**

Post-2026 Process Schedule



◆ Key NEPA Process milestones – Opportunities for Tribal, State, Partner, Stakeholder, and Public engagement





Scoping Recap

- Notice of Intent published on June 16, 2023, initiated the NEPA Scoping Process
- Three public webinars held in July
- 60-day public scoping comment period ended **August 15, 2023**
- Invited all Basin partners, stakeholders, and the public to provide oral and written comments
- Published Scoping Report and Federal Register Notice noticing availability of Report on **October 20, 2023**

Scoping Partner-Stakeholder Engagement

- Reclamation formally engaged Basin partners and stakeholders during scoping through activities including:
 - Formation of a new Federal-Tribes-States Leadership Group
 - Established with the goal of promoting equitable information sharing and discussion among the sovereign governments in the Basin
 - Continued educational sessions through the Integrated Technical Education Workgroup
 - Developed in December 2022 to ensure Basin partners and stakeholders have a common and accurate understanding of the underlying tools and concepts needed to participate in the development of operating alternatives
 - Continued engagement with Cooperating Agencies



October Federal Register Notice

October 20, 2023, Reclamation published a Federal Register Notice to announce the:

- Availability of the Scoping Summary Report
- Anticipated Purpose and Need
- Preliminary Assessment of the Proposed Federal Action
- Next steps in the Post-2026 NEPA process



Scoping Report

- Scoping Process (Chapter 2)
- Comment Collection and Analysis (Chapter 3)
- Summary of the Comment Submittals (Chapter 4)
- Proposed Federal Action and Purpose and Need (Chapter 5)
- Future Steps in the NEPA Process (Chapter 5)



Overview of Scoping Comments

- 24,290 submissions received
- 318 unique submissions
 - 73 Federal, State, and local entities
 - 16 Tribes
 - 72 Organizations
- 21,658 copies of 7 different form letters
 - BlueRibbon Coalition
 - Save the Colorado
 - Audubon
 - Glen Canyon Bypass/Fill Mead First
- 1,256 form letter submissions with additional unique content
- 1,058 duplicate submissions



Comment Coding Structure

- Each submission was reviewed to identify specific comments within the submission
- Then the individual comments were organized using a coding structure
- Coding topics:
 - NEPA Process, Laws, and Regulations
 - Alternatives
 - Resource Analysis Issues
 - Form Letters



Scoping Comment Key Themes

Overarching Theme - Next Guidelines need to be more robust, innovative, flexible, adaptive and should engage more Basin water users through expanded opportunities

- Supply and Demand Imbalance
- Holistic Approach and Sustainable Solutions
- Scope of Federal Action
- Term of the Guidelines
- Roles of Upper and Lower Basins
- Operational Strategies
- Tribal Water Rights
- Conservation and Storage Programs
- Augmentation
- Parallel Processes and Programs



Anticipated Purpose and Need

- The “**need**” for the action may be described as the underlying problem or opportunity to which the agency is responding
 - The Secretary is legally required to coordinate operations of Colorado River reservoirs
 - 2007 Interim Guidelines are expiring
 - 2007 Interim Guidelines have not sufficiently reduced risk
 - Imbalance between water supply and demand will be exacerbated by increasingly likely low-runoff conditions
 - Expanded and innovative use of conservation is needed
 - Addressing tribal concerns regarding Colorado River Basin management is needed



Anticipated Purpose and Need

- The “**purpose**” for the action may refer to the goal or the objective the agency is trying to achieve
 - Update and expand management guidelines for Colorado River reservoirs, particularly for Lake Powell and Lake Mead
 - Provide Colorado River water users a greater degree of predictability with respect to the amount of annual water available in future years under anticipated increasing variability, low runoff and low reservoir conditions



Anticipated Purpose and Need (cont'd)

- Provide additional mechanisms for the conservation, storage and delivery of water supplies in Colorado River reservoirs
- Provide new or enhanced opportunities for Basin Tribes to benefit from their water rights
- Provide flexibility to build resilience and accommodate future needs and growth that are supported by Colorado River water supplies, including the integration of unquantified tribal water rights once they are resolved



Proposed Federal Action

“...to adopt specific guidelines for coordinated reservoir management strategies to address operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead through their full operating range.”

“...designed to provide for the sustainable management of the Colorado River system and its resources under a wide range of potential future system conditions due to a changing climate.”



Proposed Federal Action

- Includes the following 3 elements:
 1. Identification of when the Secretary would allocate, reduce, or increase deliveries to the Lower Division states at, below, or above 7.5 MAF
 2. Coordinated operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead, particularly under low reservoir conditions
 3. Storage and delivery of conserved water in Lake Mead and/or Lake Powell including delivery of non-system water, exchanges; and water conserved through extraordinary measures by or for tribal, agricultural, or municipal entities



Proposed Federal Action

- The proposed federal action allows for development of **robust operating guidelines for Lake Powell and Lake Mead**, without precluding upstream or downstream actions needed to protect critical reservoir elevations.
- Framing of the proposed federal action is intended to **encourage development of a broad range of alternatives** that meet the anticipated Purpose and Need
- Reclamation intends that the guidelines will be interim in nature and extend at least 20 years (subject to further consideration during the NEPA process)



Draft EIS Analysis Approach

- Geographic scope of the environmental analysis is dependent upon the range of alternatives developed and therefore will be determined later in the NEPA process
- The environmental analysis will consider:
 - best available science
 - operating experience
 - infrastructure considerations
 - trade-offs
 - conservation, efficiency improvements, and augmentation mechanisms
 - effects of water storage on various resources



Alternatives Development Process



◆ Key NEPA Process milestones – Opportunities for Tribal, State, Partner, Stakeholder, and Public engagement



Alternatives Development Process

- The goal of this phase is to develop a broad range of reasonable alternatives and encourage stakeholder collaboration
- Foster collaborative consensus-based approaches to alternative development
- Collaborate with and provide technical assistance to Basin partners-stakeholders as they develop alternative proposals



Alternatives Development Process

- Reclamation has invested significant resources to develop a web-based **Post-2026 Operations Exploration Web Tool**
- This tool is designed to enable users with different levels of technical skill to explore, create, and compare potential operating strategies to enhance development of alternatives
- The tool will be available in late November
- Refer to the Integrated Technical Education Workgroup (ITEW) page on the project website for additional information:
 - <https://www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/post2026/itew.html>



Alternatives Development Process



Need More Information?

- Project Website: www.usbr.gov/ColoradoRiverBasin/Post2026
- Send questions to: crbpost2026@usbr.gov
- Call the project telephone line: (602) 789-3889





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Questions?

Please click the Q&A button in Zoom to submit
a question



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Closing Remarks